The Lion in The Room

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The Lion in The Room

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Summary

When the lion is in the room, Will's therapist used to say, *you will know*.

There is a lion in this room.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

When the lion is in the room , Will's therapist used to say, *you will know.*

There is a lion in this room.

The lion is wearing a linen blazer over beige lambswool that smells enticingly of citrus and spice and the thick scent of unmated alpha. His hair falls softly over his forehead and his handshake is firm and warm, but his bright and curious eyes are too cold and too deep. Will averts his gaze instinctively to avoid seeing more.

"Not fond of eye contact, are you?" The lion asks gently, tipping his head in a vain attempt to catch Will's gaze. His eyes in the light are brown and gold and his stare feels hot on Will's skin.

"Eyes are distracting," Will responds, keeping his eyes down. "You see too much. You don't see enough." And Will has seen enough already to know that the lion is dangerous. He hunches a little deeper into the collar of his jacket in a reflexive effort to cover his neck. His heart beats so loudly in his ears that he almost doesn't hear the lion speaking.

"...no forts in the bone arena of your skull for things you love." The lion says, eyes wide and openly appraising Will, who turns instead to face Jack.

"Whose profile is he working on?" Will's shoulders hunch further in the unmistakable posture of a cornered animal. His exit from the room is hurried and awkward, a rushed retreat from the alpha predator's lair.

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Safe behind the locked door of his office, Will slips off his jacket and unbuttons his shirt. He lifts his undershirt and runs his hands over the smooth fabric of the binder, reassuring himself of its firm pressure against his skin. He takes the oil roller from his pocket and carefully reapplies pheromone oil at the base of his throat, under his arms, and over the scent glands on his neck. He breathes the scent of chamomile and lavender that disguises the beta pheromone compound and it calms him as he buttons his shirt and recentres his tie.

Will ducks into the washroom next to the lecture hall. He uses the stall and afterwards watches himself in the mirror as he washes his hands, all the while convincing himself that the lion had not discerned his secret. Convincing himself that he was safe.

Will doesn't feel safe.

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The forensics team hovers around the sunlit scene, fluttering around the periphery of Will's vision with flashes and swabs and brushes while he watches crows dine on Cassie Boyle. *Take it; this is my body* .

The killer envisions transformation, but not for Cassie; she is only the vessel. The killer wishes to transform Will; to elevate him, change his perception, open his mind. With an

effort, Will halts the pendulum and opens his eyes. For now, it is enough that he can see the negative space around Cassie Boyle and finally find the missing piece that fits the puzzle of his offender profile.

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Will is in the bathroom when the knock comes on his motel room door. He yanks a compression shirt over his head and pulls on yesterday's boxers that still carry the clean, soapy smell of scent neutraliser. He rolls scented oil and deodorant under his arms before hiding everything under a damp towel and opening the door.

The lion's hair is neatly combed and he is carrying a thermos and an insulated bag.

"Good morning, Will," the lion says breezily. "May I come in?"

"Where's Crawford?" Will growls, casually angling himself across the door to his room. Even this alpha would not enter another's space uninvited.

"Deposed in court. The adventure is yours and mine today." The lion smiles lopsidedly, carefully concealing his fangs. "May I come in?" he asks again.

Will briefly considers closing the door, but that will only invite further curiosity. An impression of openness, Will has learned, casts an ideal shadow in which to hide one's truth. He stands aside, gesturing stiffly toward the formica table beside the door.

Will leaves the door ajar. He is confident about his neutraliser but he has, after all, been here all night, and it is possible the bedclothes may yet carry some trace of his natural scent.

The lion serves coffee and breakfast with a chef's pride. He watches Will eat with genuine pleasure and despite the weight of his gaze, Will finds it easy to return the lion's smile. The food is delicious.

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Will watches through the smears of blood on his glasses Hannibal helping Alana into the ambulance. She takes the injured girl's hand as the door closes.

His glasses are gone. He smells citrus and spice and the sharp odor of alcohol then they are back on his face, clean and clear, and the lion is draping a fleece blanket over Will's shoulders. He stands so close that Will can feel the heat of his body even through the blanket, and breathe the calming scent of his skin. *Just for a moment,* Will decides. Minutes pass and he finds himself unable to move, hands and feet numb from shock and the creeping evening cold. Will shivers.

The lion - *Hannibal* - takes Will's arm and leads him away from the scene.

End Notes

So far this is just a fragment but I didn't want it to just lurk in my Google Drive so I'm putting it up here in expectation that it will be joined by some other interconnected shorts.

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